

COVER LETTER WRITING GUIDE

HIRING AUDIENCE
ACTION WORDS
PROFESSIONAL
DESIGN PROOFED
FORMAT CONSISTENT CONCISE
RESULTS SKILLS TARGETED
DYNAMIC BRANDING QUANTIFY



Career Development Center

Introduction to Professional Cover Letter Writing

Are cover letters used as much as they were back in the ancient days of paper based communication? Absolutely not. Do recruiters and hiring managers read every cover letter? Absolutely not. Do you still need to know how to write a cover letter? Absolutely! And here's why. Some organizations still require cover letters as part of the formal application process and some hiring managers place a high value on the quality of the cover letter as part of the overall candidate evaluation. So you should be able to compose an effective cover letter that explains two key points. The cover letter is a formal way to explain why you are interested in the company/ position and most importantly why the company should be interested in you.

What can the cover letter do for you?

1. **Answer the "Why" question.** Think of the resume as an outline of your credentials. Resumes are primarily written in bullet statements with brief narrative and are not designed to deliver an explanation of why you fit a company and why the company should be interested in you. A well written cover letter is an opportunity to develop a compelling argument.
2. **Tell a Story.** Use the basics of effective story telling to help craft your cover letter. Good stories are interesting and tend to have a beginning, middle and end. Capture the reader's interest with something unique in the first paragraph about why the company should be interested in you. In your middle two paragraphs think of ways to show how you fit the organization and what your unique qualities might be. Describe the future and what you might expect to contribute and accomplish. Finally, talk about the next steps and express appreciation.
3. **Personality.** Help employers get to know you through the cover letter. This will be conveyed through your unique style and choices for content.
4. **Writing Ability.** Demonstrating your ability to effectively communicate in writing is a valuable skill across work environments. A well written cover letter shows your ability to express ideas clearly and to develop a persuasive argument.

Cover Letter Steps:

1. **Research.** If you're being asked to submit a cover letter as part of a formal job application then your first step is to do some research. Make sure you have a copy of the job description or posting and that your resume is current. Research the company and consider their mission, values, products/services, and consider why you think you would be a good fit. Print a hard copy of your resume and highlight accomplishments that you can expand in the cover letter to build your persuasive argument. Know the company, know the position, and know why you fit!
2. **Create Interest.** Introduce yourself and explain why you're interested in the company, position and give a compelling reason for the reader to be interested in you.
3. **State Your Case.** The middle two paragraphs are the heart of the resume. It's your chance to tell the reader why they should be interested in you through describing accomplishments and how you expect to contribute to the needs of the organization.
4. **Finish Strong.** Always thank the reader for their valuable time and consideration and you're your initiative by describing how you will be following up with them.
5. **Final Step.** Send your draft to the Career Development Center for a review and then make final edits. Print and mail or save as a PDF and submit electronically with other credentials. A well-crafted, professional resume will open many doors and give you the best possible chance for getting an interview. Once you land the interview, then it's up to you to land the job. So, resumes don't get you the job, but they are a critical element of the job search that leads to an offer.

Cover Letter Outline

[Use the same heading style for your name and contact information that you used on your resume for your cover letter. This will let the employer know the documents are paired together.]

Date

[Hiring Manager's Name]

Title

Employer

Mailing Address

Dear [Hiring Manager's Name]:

First Paragraph. In your initial paragraph, state the reason for the letter, name the specific position or type of work for which you are applying, and indicate from which source (career center, news media, friend, professor, etc.) you learned of the opening. Try to add something that creates interest for the employer to continue reading. Consider including how your values and philosophy correlate with the company's mission and goals.

Second (and Third) Paragraph. Explain how your academic background and work history makes you a qualified candidate. Try not to repeat the same information the reader will find in the resume. You can use examples from your resume and application form which summarizes your qualifications and experiences. Use the cover letter to show more of your personality and to tell a brief story connecting how you've successfully demonstrated skills related to the position for which you are applying.

Final Paragraph. In the closing paragraph, indicate your desire for a personal interview and the days and times in which you are available. State your phone number in the letter if that is where you can be most easily reached. Close your letter with a statement or question which will encourage a response. For example, "I would welcome the opportunity to interview in person whereby we can discuss my qualifications in greater detail." End by expressing your gratitude to the employer for their time and consideration

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Your Typed Name

Enclosure/Attached

[Use "Enclosure" for a paper application and "Attached" for an electronic application.]

Cover Letter Example

WILLIAM WUNDT

WWW.LINKEDIN.COM/IN/WUNDTPSYCH

William@gmail.com

209 Founders Lane Murfreesboro, TN 37127

615 - 978 - 6314

January 25, 2015

Jennifer Sullivan
Human Resources Manager
ABC Company
1234 Team Street
Manhattan, TN 98765

Dear Ms. Sullivan:

It is with great enthusiasm that I submit my application for a management internship with ABC Company. I heard of this opportunity from one of my management professors Dr. Stacy Jones at Middle Tennessee State University. As a senior graduating with a bachelor's degree in Psychology, I am confident my proficiency with the Spanish language and leadership experience will make me an asset to your team.

I have long since admired ABC Company's commitment to diversity and ethics. Barriers keeping countries isolated in the past are being broken down and it is critical that those in leadership roles are well-versed in multiple languages and multi-culturally competent. ABC Company is on the forefront of this mission and I am inspired by the company's pledge to honor these values. I have a similar passion for incorporating other cultures into my life. In fact, I decided to study psychology and focus on becoming fluent in Spanish in order to more effectively communicate and understand those around me. I believe, as is stated in ABC Company's philosophies, that the most influential managers are those that understand the people they are leading.

In the past, I have served in several positions where I have been able to lead and counsel others. As an Orientation Team Leader I led groups of 25 freshmen around MTSU's campus and advised them as they became acclimated to the university. One of my most memorable leadership experiences was serving with Habitat for Humanity where I was able to motivate and manage a team of my peers as we built homes for orphaned children in Mexico. Leaders are men and women who not only delegate and organize, but also serve and give back to their community. ABC Company is actively engaged in philanthropic efforts and I would enjoy being a part of an organization that fully integrates ethical conduct and charitable giving into their mission.

In closing, I am thrilled about the possibility of being involved with ABC Company and would be grateful for the opportunity to meet with you in person to discuss my qualifications further. I can be reached via phone at 888.888.8888. I appreciate your consideration and look forward to hearing from you soon.

Warmest regards,



William Wundt